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# THE REPUBLIC OF PLATO

BOOK IX

translated by ALEXANDER KER







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THE  
REPUBLIC OF PLATO

BOOK IX

TRANSLATED BY  
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# THE REPUBLIC

## BOOK IX

SOCRATES, ADEIMANTUS, AND GLAUCON

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I. "Then we have still left for consideration," I said, "the tyrannical man alone, his change from the democratic man, his character after the transformation, and his manner of life, whether wretched or happy."

"Yes," he replied, "he is still left."

"Well," said I, "do you know what I still lack?"

"What is it?"

"The question of the desires, their nature and number, has not, in my opinion, been sufficiently discussed; and as long as this defect remains, the investigation of our subject will be less clear than it ought to be."

"Well, then," he asked, "has the right opportunity escaped us?"

"Certainly not. And observe now what I wish to note in the desires; it is this: among the unnecessary pleasures and desires some, it seems to me, are unlawful. They are probably innate in everybody, but when held in check by law and by the better desires with the aid of reason, they may in some people be either entirely eradicated or left few and



weak, while in others they are stronger and more numerous."

"And what," he asked, "do you mean to say these desires are?"

"Those that are aroused during sleep," I answered, "whenever the rest of the soul is quiescent, that part of it which is rational and gentle and rules the passionate element, then the bestial and savage part, gorged with food or drink, wakes up and darts about, and shaking off sleep, seeks to go and gratify its instincts. You are aware that in such a condition it dares to attempt anything, as though wholly infatuated and lost to shame. In its frenzy it does not hesitate to attempt intercourse with a mother or with a god, or with any man or beast. It is ready to commit murder in any form, and there is no forbidden food it will not devour. In short, it shrinks from no deed of folly or shamelessness."

"What you say is very true."

"But when, I fancy, a man who is of healthy body and well-regulated mind, before going to sleep rouses the rational part of his soul, and after feasting it on noble thoughts and arguments holds converse with himself; and neither starving nor surfeiting the passionate element, in order that it may  
572 go to rest and not cause disturbance to the best part with its joys or griefs, but permit this undisturbed, alone by itself, to pursue its inquiries and reach after the attainment of what it does not know in the past, the present or the future; and when again he has in like manner soothed the passionate element, and does not go to sleep in a state of

violent agitation because embittered against any one, but having pacified the two irrational parts and stirred into activity the third part in which wisdom is found, thus takes his rest, then, as you know, in such a condition he best apprehends the truth, and the visions of his dreams are least unlawful.”<sup>1</sup>

“I think all that is perfectly true.”

“In giving these observations a full statement we have been led into a digression; what we want to establish is this, that there exists in each one of us, even in those who have every appearance of being good people, a terrible, fierce and lawless kind of desires, which makes itself manifest in dreams. See whether you believe that I am right and if you agree with me.”

“I agree.”

· II. “And now recall the character which we ascribed to the democratic man. He was produced, I suppose, by having been trained from his youth upward by a penurious father, who honored only the money-making desires, esteeming lightly the unnecessary ones which have for their object merely amusement and ornament. Is it not so?”

“Yes.”

“And then associating with the smarter set, with men given up to those desires which we have just described, he plunged, after their fashion, into every kind of insolent excess because of his aversion to

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<sup>1</sup> Cicero has translated, or rather, paraphrased this entire passage. *De Divinatione*, I, 29.

such company, and when feeding to the full and fattening the drone, they have implanted in it the sting of longing, then this ruler of the soul having madness as his body-guard breaks out into a storm of rage, and if he finds within the man any opinions or desires that have an air of decency and that still retain some sense of shame, he straightway proceeds to kill or banish them, until he has removed every trace of moderation and in its stead has installed madness brought in from without."

"You are giving," he said, "in the clearest terms the origin of the tyrannical man."

"And is it not then for this reason," I asked, "that Love has from of old been called a tyrant?"

"So it appears," he replied.

"And further, my friend," I continued, "has not the inebriate the spirit of a tyrant?"

"Yes, he has."

"Moreover, the man who is deranged and unsettled in mind attempts to rule not only men but also gods, under the impression that he is able to do so."

"Quite true," he said.

"And, my excellent friend," I said, "the tyrannical man in the strictest sense of the term is produced when one either by reason of nature or his manner of life or both has been made subject to the dominion of drunkenness, lust and madness."

"That must be so."

III. "Such, as it appears, is the origin also of the tyrannical man. And now how does he live?"

himself above father and mother, and when he has squandered his share, wish to seize upon his parents' goods and make them his own?"

"Yes, that is certain," said he.

"But if his parents do not allow him to do this, will he not first attempt to defraud and outwit them?"

"Yes, always."

"In case he does not succeed in that, will he not resort to robbery and force?"

"I believe so," he replied.

"Then if the aged father and mother, my excellent friend, resist and fight for their own, will he not through reverence relent and hesitate to play the tyrant?"

"I haven't much hope for the parents of such a fellow."

"But then, Adeimantus, I implore you, when it is a question of a mistress of whom he is newly enamoured to whom he is bound merely by caprice, as compared with his mother whom he has loved all his life and who is united to him by the sacred ties of nature, or of a beautiful youth just chosen as his favorite to whom he is in like manner bound merely by caprice, as compared with his father outworn by years, his oldest and most necessary friend — do you really think he will beat his parents and make them the slaves of these creatures if he brings such into the same house?"

"Yes, by Zeus, he will," he said.

"It is indeed," said I, "a blessed thing apparently to give life to a tyrannical son."

population are well-disposed, they go away and become the body-guard of some other tyrant or serve as mercenaries, wherever there is war, but if all is quiet and peaceful they stay at home and commit many petty crimes."

"What kind of crimes do you mean?"

"For example, they are thieves, housebreakers, cutpurses, pickpockets, robbers of temples, kidnappers; sometimes if they have a ready tongue, they turn informers, and bear false witness and take bribes."

"Yes," he said, "these are petty crimes, if the perpetrators are few in number."

"Surely," I said, "since small is small in comparison with great, and all these things, as affecting the wretchedness and misery of the city, do not, as the proverb says, measure up to the mark of the tyrant. But when now there are in the state many men of like character and still others who are their adherents, and they all discover how numerous they are, then it is that, helped by the folly of the public, they create the tyrant, the one of themselves who has the greatest and mightiest tyrant in his own soul."

"Naturally," he said, "for he will be most fit to act the tyrant."

"Now, if the citizens yield willing obedience, all goes well. But in case the city does not submit, then, as he once punished father and mother, so also will he in turn coerce his fatherland, if he is in a position to do so, by bringing in new followers, and under the yoke imposed by these will he have and

the longer he lives in the practice of tyranny the more imperious he becomes."

"That is inevitable," said Glaucon, taking his turn in the discussion.

IV. "Now," I continued, "will not he who shows himself the wickedest of men manifestly prove to be the most wretched? And will not he who has longest and most absolutely exercised tyranny have been the man who in very truth has been most utterly and longest wicked and wretched? But the many have likewise many opinions."<sup>2</sup>

"Yes, certainly," he said, "that must be as you say."

"Now," I said, "will not the tyrannical man be like the state ruled by a tyrant, and the man of the people like the state in which the people rule, and even so the others?"

"Why not?"

"Then, as state is to state in respect of virtue and happiness, so is man in relation to man?"

"No doubt."

"Then as regards virtue, how does the state ruled by a tyrant compare with the kingly state as we originally described it?"

"It is just the opposite," said he, "for the one is the best, and the other the worst."

"I shall not ask you," I said, "which of the two you mean to say is the better, and which the worse,

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<sup>2</sup>In this short sentence Plato expresses his contempt for the opinions of the multitude.

"That also," he said, "is a perfectly fair proposal."

"Shall we then," said I, "proceed as if we belonged to those who are competent to judge and have already had experience with people of this character, in order that there may be some one to answer our questions?"

"Certainly."

V. "Come now," I said, "let us reason together in this way: recall the parallel of man and state, considering the one after the other, and enumerate the traits of each in succession."

"What have you in mind?" he asked.

"To begin with the state," I said, "will you maintain that the one which is under the dominion of a tyrant is free or enslaved?"

"No state could be in more abject bondage," he replied.

"And yet you see in such a state masters and freemen."

"Yes," he replied, "a few I am aware are of this kind, but the majority therein, I might say, and those who are the best, live in ignoble and wretched servitude."

"If then," I proceeded, "the man is like the state, must not the same thing befall him, and his soul be freighted with grievous servility and thralldom, and will not slavery get possession of the noblest parts thereof, while a small part, and that the meanest and maddest, gains the mastery?"

"Well, in considering all these evils and others like them, you have decided that this tyrannical state is the most wretched of states?"

"And am I not right?" he asked.

"You certainly are," I said. "Now, when you look at the tyrannical man from the same point of view, what do you say of him?"

"That he is of all men most miserable," he replied.

"In this reply you are no longer right," I said.

"How is that?" he asked.

"This man, according to my way of thinking, is not yet come to the lowest state of misery."

"Who then has reached it?"

"This man you will probably think still more miserable."

"Who is that?"

"I mean the man who being of a tyrannical nature does not lead a private life, but is unfortunate and, by some mischance, compelled to become a tyrant."

"From what has been said before I presume that you are right."

"Yes," I said, "but such things one must not believe upon mere presumption; on the contrary, one must examine them very carefully by the method we have adopted. For the investigation is concerned with the weightiest of matters — the question of a good and an evil life."

"Perfectly true," he said.

"Then consider whether I am right. It seems to me we must make a digression in order to gain a clear understanding of our subject as we proceed with our inquiry."



"Now, suppose," I said, "that the same god were to surround him with many neighbors, who would not tolerate the claim of any man to be another's master, but in case they got such a person into their power would visit him with the severest penalties?"

"In that case," he said, "I imagine he would find himself in a hopelessly evil plight, being watched on every side by none but enemies."

"Is not this the sort of restraint in which the tyrant is held, he who is by nature such a one as we have described, being a prey to many and manifold fears and lusts? And while he has an eager and inquisitive soul, is he not the only one in the state who may not travel or see anything that attracts all freemen, but on the contrary he lives for the most part in his prison, hidden like a woman in the house, and is jealous of the other citizens, when any one of them goes abroad and enjoys the delights of travel?"

"Why, certainly," he said.

VI. "Greater then by evils such as these, is the harvest of misery reaped by the man who, with an ill-constituted inner nature, by the tyrannical ruler, I mean, whom you have just pronounced most miserable, does not lead the life of a private citizen, but on the contrary, is compelled somehow by fate to be a tyrant, and while he has not acquired self-mastery, must rule others. He is like a person with a diseased and paralytic body who instead of car-

"Come now," I said, "as the judge in competitive contests proclaims his decision, do you in like manner declare who in your opinion is first in respect of happiness, and who second, and give all the five men each his place in order, the royal, the timocratic, the oligarchic, the democratic, and the tyrannical."

"Well, the decision is easy," he said. "For I arrange them in the order of their entrance upon the stage, judging them by the test of virtue and vice, happiness and its opposite."

"Shall we then," I said, "hire a herald, or shall I myself announce that the son of Ariston has declared the best and justest man to be the happiest, who is the most royal-minded, and who rules himself royally; while the worst and most unjust man he judges to be most miserable, and declares this is he who, being by nature most tyrannical, subjects himself and the entire state to the most absolute tyranny?"

"You shall make the announcement yourself," he said.

"And shall I add to the proclamation," I asked, "that it makes no difference whether their characters are known to or hidden from all men and gods?"

"You may add that," he said.

VII. "Very good," I said; "here we have our first proof. And this, if you agree, would be the second."

"Now, do we not say that the passionate element is ever wholly intent upon ruling and victory and reputation?"

"We certainly do."

"If, then, we were to call it victory-loving and honor-loving, should we be right?"

"Perfectly right."

"And now, as to the faculty with which we learn, it is obvious to every one that it is always striving to discover where the truth is to be found, and that it concerns itself less than the others with money and reputation."

"Less by far."

"If, then, we were to call it knowledge-loving and philosophic, should we not apply appropriate terms to this part of the soul?"

"Why not?"

"Is it not again true," I said, "that in the souls of some men this last element holds sway, while in the souls of other people, one or other of the two former, as the case may be, is dominant?"

"Yes," he replied.

"For these reasons, then, may we assume that there are three principal classes of men—lovers of wisdom, lovers of victory, and lovers of gain?"

"Exactly so."

"Hence, there are also three kinds of pleasures corresponding severally to each of the three classes?"

"Certainly."

"Then do you know that if you were to ask three such men, in turn, which of their lives is most pleas-

the conditions requisite for reaching a right judgment? Are they not experience, insight, and reason? Can there be found a better test than these?"

"None better," he said.

"Well then, reflect: which of the three men has in greatest measure experience of all the pleasures which we have mentioned? Do you think that the lover of gain, while learning the nature of truth in its essence, has a greater experience of the pleasure of knowledge than the philosopher has of the pleasure of gain?"

"There is," he replied, "a great difference. For the philosopher must of necessity from his childhood upwards, taste other pleasures than those of knowledge; but the lover of gain is not compelled to learn the nature of reality and thus to taste the sweetness of this pleasure and to acquire any experience of it. Indeed, however strong his desire might be, he would not easily attain it."

"By far then," I said, "the philosopher surpasses the lover of gain in his experience of both these pleasures."

"Yes, by far."

"And how does he stand in relation to the lover of honor?<sup>3</sup> Has he less experience of the pleasure that goes with honor than the latter has of the pleasure that waits on knowledge?"

"On the contrary," he said, "honor comes to all three in proportion as they severally gain their ends. For the rich man, the brave and the wise man are

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<sup>3</sup> For this interpretation of a difficult sentence, the translator is indebted to Dr. James Adam.

"Ask, then," he said.

"Tell me, then," I said, "is not pain the opposite of pleasure?"

"Yes, indeed."

"And is there not a state of the soul which is untouched by either pleasure or pain?"

"There certainly is."

"It is an intermediate state between them both where the soul rests undisturbed by either—is not that your meaning?"

"Yes," he replied.

"Now, do you remember," I asked, "how sick people talk during their illness?"

"How is that?"

"That there is, indeed, nothing pleasanter than health, but they never realized that this was the greatest of pleasures until they fell sick."

"I remember," he said.

"Have you not also heard people who are suffering from severe pain, say that there is nothing pleasanter than relief from pain?"

"I have."

"And you can think of many other like cases, I suppose, in which men who are suffering regard as their chief joy, not pleasure itself, but the absence of pain and the feeling of relief from it."

"Yes," he said, "perhaps at such times relief from pain does become pleasant and a thing to be desired."

"For the same reason," I continued, "when pleasure ceases, that sort of cessation will be painful."

thing else than that he had reached the top, if he had not seen the real upper region?"

"No, by Zeus, I don't believe that such a man could have any other thought."

"But if he were carried back," said I, "would he not believe that he had returned to the foot, and doubtless he would not be deceived?"

"Surely not."

"And all this would result from his ignorance of what is really above, in the middle and below?"

"That is obvious."

"Is it, then, surprising that men who are ignorant of the truth acquire false ideas upon many subjects including pleasure and pain as well as the intermediate state, so that when they are subjected to 585 pain they believe that they suffer and do really experience pain; but when they are freed from pain and pass into the intermediate state, they firmly believe they have reached the fruition of positive pleasure, they, being deceived in their ignorance of pleasure, are misled in contrasting pain with the absence of pain, just as if, not knowing white, they were to compare black with gray?"

"No, indeed," he answered; "I should be much more surprised if the case were different."

"Now look at the question in this way: are not hunger and thirst and the like a sort of void in the bodily state?"

"Yes, they are."

"And in like manner are not ignorance and folly a void in the soul?"

"Quite true."

"And will not a man fill the first kind of void by receiving food and the second by acquiring intelligence?"

"Certainly."

"Which now is the truer fulness, that which comes from what is less real or from what is more?"

"Obviously, from what is more."

"Well now, what classes of things in your opinion partake more fully of true being, for example bread, drink, meat and, in a word, all that nourishes the body, or the class which includes true opinion, knowledge, mind and, in a word, all virtue? Form your judgment in this way: do you think that what partakes of the unchanging and immortal and truth, and which is itself akin to these in its nature and origin, is more real, or what partakes of the ever changing and the mortal and which is itself akin to these in its nature and origin?"

"That which partakes of the unchanging," he replied, "is incomparably more real."

"Does now the essence of the unchanging partake more of being than of knowledge?"

"Certainly not."

"Or more than of truth?"

"No."

"But whatever has less of truth has less also of being?"

"Of necessity."

"Then, in general, all that contributes to the care of the body partakes less of truth and being than that which contributes to the care of the soul?"

always looking toward the ground and fixed upon their dining tables, they feed and fatten and propagate their species, and in their excessive eagerness to enjoy these pleasures they butt and kick one another with horns and hoofs of iron and end by killing each other because of their insatiable lust; inasmuch as they fill with things unreal that part of themselves which is unreal and incontinent."

"In most fitting terms, Socrates," said Glaucon, "you portray like an oracle the life of the multitude."

"Must not then their pleasures be mixed with pains? For they are mere images and shadow pictures of true pleasure, and take their color from being set over against each other, so that they appear exaggerated and implant in fools mad desires for themselves; and men fight for their possession as, according to Stesichorus, the Greeks before Troy fought for the image of Helen in their ignorance of the truth."<sup>5</sup>

"It is quite inevitable," he said, "that the truth of the case should be something of that sort."

XI. "And further, must not the same thing happen with the spirited element of the soul, whenever a man makes it a rule of his conduct to gratify this part of his nature, whether he is envious from motives of ambition, or violent through love of

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<sup>5</sup> For the story here referred to, the reader may consult Euripides' tragedy "Helena," where the poet follows the legend that the Greeks before Troy fought for the image of Helen.



"A marvelous computation," he said, "you have made of the difference between the two men, the  
588 just and the unjust, in respect of pleasure and pain."

"And yet a true computation," I said, "seeing that it is concerned with the life of both men, if days and nights and months and years are concerned with them."

"And doubtless they are," he said.

"Now if the good and just man so far surpasses in pleasure the evil and unjust man, is it not incalculable to what extent he will surpass him in grace of life, beauty and virtue?"

"Yes, by Zeus, he will incalculably."

XII. "Well, now," I said, "since we have reached this point in our argument, let us revert to the original statement that brought us hither. It was said, if I am not mistaken, that injustice was profitable to the perfectly unjust man provided he was reputed to be just. Or was not this the statement?"

"Certainly, that was said."

"Now then," said I, "let us return in our discussion to the argument of our first opponent<sup>7</sup> seeing that we have come to an agreement upon the effects produced by just and unjust conduct."

"What shall we say to him?" he asked.

"Let us in the first place form in thought an image of the soul, to the end that the author of

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<sup>7</sup> The reference here is probably to Thrasymachus, who withdraws from the discussion at the end of Book I.

this dictum may comprehend the meaning of his words."

"What sort of an image?" he asked.

"An image like one of those creations which are fabled to have existed in ancient times, Chimera or Scylla or Cerberus, and there are many other monsters which are said to have combined two or more forms into one nature."

"Yes, there are such fables," he said.

"Then do you now mould the form of a manifold and many-headed monster, having a ring of heads, some of tame animals, others of savage beasts with the power of producing from itself all these heads and of changing them at will."

"Such a work," he said, "requires a skilful artist; yet, as thought is more easily moulded than wax and other like substances, let the figure be formed as you propose."

"Give me now two other forms, the one of a lion, the other of a man. But the first of the three forms is to be by far the largest, and the second, next."

"That," he said, "is an easier task, and it is done."

"Now join these three together so that somehow or other they may grow into one."

"They are joined," he said.

"Next envelope them with the image of a single being, of a man, for example, so that he who is unable to look within but sees merely the outer shell may believe the whole to be a single living creature, and that a man."

